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SUBJECT: DFM RYABKOV: GOR ENERGIZED ON SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP,
BILATERAL ISSUES

REF: MOSCOW 2189

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle; reasons 1.4(b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a lengthy and substantive discussion August 26, Ambassador reviewed with DFM Ryabkov a wide range of bilateral issues, including senior USG visits to Moscow in the coming months, high-level engagement on critical summit follow-up issues such as START follow-on and cooperation on Iran. Ryabkov was enthusiastic about prospects for reaching a START follow-on agreement by the early December deadline, citing specifically and positively the text of U.S. proposals as a solid basis for work. Ambassador and Ryabkov discussed Iran in depth, including a joint US-Russia briefing to the IAEA on transfer of LEU from Natanz. Ambassador also raised the importance we attach to the transfer of research reactor fuel from Poland to Russia. On the Bilateral Presidential Commission, he agreed that the number of working groups should be limited, but made a strong appeal for adding one devoted to sports. As for his involvement as co-chair of the foreign policy working group (with U/S Burns), he emphasized counter-terrorism as a key issue, and called for efforts to ensure close coordination with the U.S.-Russia Counter-terrorism working group. Noting that the Afghanistan Lethal Transit Agreement has not yet been reviewed by the Duma, he declared the GOR's readiness to proceed with implementation, and welcomed the idea of publicizing the first flights. End Summary.

START - Ready to Get it Done

¶2. (C) Ambassador met for over an hour with DFM Ryabkov August 26. Plunging into a discussion of START follow-on, Ryabkov expressed gratitude for the advance copy of U.S. START follow-on proposals delivered August 25 (Reftel), which is already been reviewed by the Russian inter-agency, and which he himself has read in part. The advance copy will enable the Russian delegation to the August 31-September 4 Geneva talks to be able to respond substantively to at least some - though likely not all - of the U.S. proposals. He recalled the 7 documents that the Russian delegation had presented to U.S. negotiators just prior to the summer break. Those documents, informed by the new U.S. proposals, will form the basis for presentations to be made next week on key preamble and operative paragraphs of the draft agreement. He acknowledged that U.S. and Russian views do not coincide on all elements of the agreement, including on the question of working groups, though he downplayed their significance and urged the U.S. and Russian teams not to let them become "stumbling blocks" for resolution of other issues. He pledged that he and the Russian team, headed by Ambassador Antonov, would be working "24/7" to come to agreement on a text before the deadline of early December.

13. (C) Ambassador thanked Ryabkov for his comments and reaffirmed U.S. readiness to meet the December deadline. Ryabkov added that the approach of using the existing START agreement text and working through to update was wise and efficient.

Cooperation to Transfer Iranian LEU Back to Russia

14. (C) Ambassador carefully outlined the imperative of reaching agreement on the substance of a joint U.S.-Russian briefing to the IAEA on how to respond to Iran with a way forward on transfer of low enriched uranium (LEU) from the Iranian research reactor at Natanz to Russia. Beyond the importance of getting the LEU out of Iran, the Ambassador explained the political significance the joint U.S.-Russian effort would carry, demonstrating real cooperation and unity on a matter of utmost importance. Ryabkov paid close attention to the Ambassador's comments and began his response by noting that the U.S. and Russia were not far from an agreement on the substance of the briefing, though in a swipe at the Russian interagency he lamented that some key elements "had been made more ambiguous in the interest of agreement." Russia had engaged with the U.S. "quietly and confidentially," working on the substance while making clear that the political consequences of taking joint action also had to be evaluated.

15. (C) However, Ryabkov continued, Russia was now concerned about the "negative linkage" being made by the U.S. by warning that a failure by Iran to agree to the terms of LEU

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transfer would have to lead to consequences, including perhaps additional sanctions. How the terms of the proposal are conveyed to Iran (including the question of whether Iran could continue to develop its research reactor if it transfers the LEU to Russia) would be critical. Ryabkov went on to question the U.S. reluctance to allow IAEA to handle the assessment of the risks due to enrichment, arguing that the IAEA would provide an independent analysis of the situation that would have solid credibility. In short, the LEU presentation risked engendering a strong overall negative Iranian reaction and setting back efforts on any new incentive packages or even give Tehran an excuse to start to reconfigure the reactor at Natanz.

16. (C) Ryabkov cited language agreed by G-8 ministers in statements from Trieste and L'Aquila as "extraordinary," and that there had not been any developments since that time to warrant taking any tougher action. The Iranians were clever enough to take - or avoid - certain actions prior to meetings of the IAEA Board of Governors. The Ambassador encouraged Russia to maintain unity with the U.S. and others on all matters related to Iran. Ryabkov closed the discussion by stressing that Russia wants to "remain in the same wavelength" with its partners. He said making the joint presentation to the IAEA would "buy time" and give further impetus to diplomatic efforts on Iranian nuclear fuel.

Bilateral Presidential Commission

17. (C) Ryabkov conveyed the importance he places on forthcoming consultations in Frankfurt and Washington with U/S Burns. Ambassador explained in greater detail the U.S. concept of Bilateral President Commission (BPC) working groups, our desire to keep their numbers low and, in general, the proposals (forthcoming) for sub-groups under specific working groups. With regard to the responsibilities he and U/S Burns will share as co-chairs of the Commission's Foreign Policy Working Group, Ryabkov recalled the work of the Counter-Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) and lauded the engagement of Russian C/T expert DFM Safonov. He confessed that the MFA had yet to come to a conclusion on recommendations as to how to coordinate the work of the BPC's

FP WG with that of CTWG "so as not to lose the progress made, or cover the same ground again." Ryabkov also wondered about U.S.-Russian engagement on Iran in the context of the BPC, and how that would mesh with such work already underway in other fora, including EU3 3, G-8 and at IAEA.

¶8. (C) Ambassador reminded Ryabkov of the U.S. officials who would join U/S Burns for his meeting with Ryabkov in Washington September 21, focusing on Afghanistan, C/T and DPRK (sanctions). Ryabkov said his team had yet to be assembled, but that since discussions were scheduled for just 2 hours, he was debating the usefulness of bringing experts from Moscow. While recalling that the September 21 session would not be the first formal session of the FP WG, Ambassador explained the importance we place on having launched a discussion of the issues the group is charged with managing so that Secretary Clinton and FM Lavrov can make reference to it when they formally launch the BPC in October.

¶9. (C) Ryabkov expressed mild disappointment that the U.S. fact sheets (issued at the summit) did not quite correspond with what the two presidents had agreed on the full range of working groups. While agreeing with the Ambassador that fewer working groups were better, Ryabkov nonetheless raised the matter of adding a working group on Sports to the Commission. Ambassador explained that we envisioned sports being dealt with under the Culture Working Group. Ryabkov also raised the issue of launching the work of the intelligence working group. He said that the GOR was not "asking for early clarity on the matter," recognizing that bringing intelligence services together is complicated. He urged, though, that both sides begin to think about how the group would function.

Afghanistan Lethal Transit

¶10. (C) Ryabkov was effusive about the Afghanistan transit agreement for lethal materiel, signed during President Obama's July visit to Moscow. While the agreement has not yet been submitted for legislative review (given the Duma's summer recess), the GOR is fully prepared to begin implementing the agreement, as envisioned, as of September 6.

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Ryabkov said the GOR is particularly proud of the document, and would be pleased to work with the U.S. on publicizing the first flights that take place across Russian airspace. He did not think publicity would in any way complicate eventual Duma ratification. Both he and the Ambassador agreed that the flights would be a solid demonstration of concrete cooperation on an issue of mutual concern.
Beyrle